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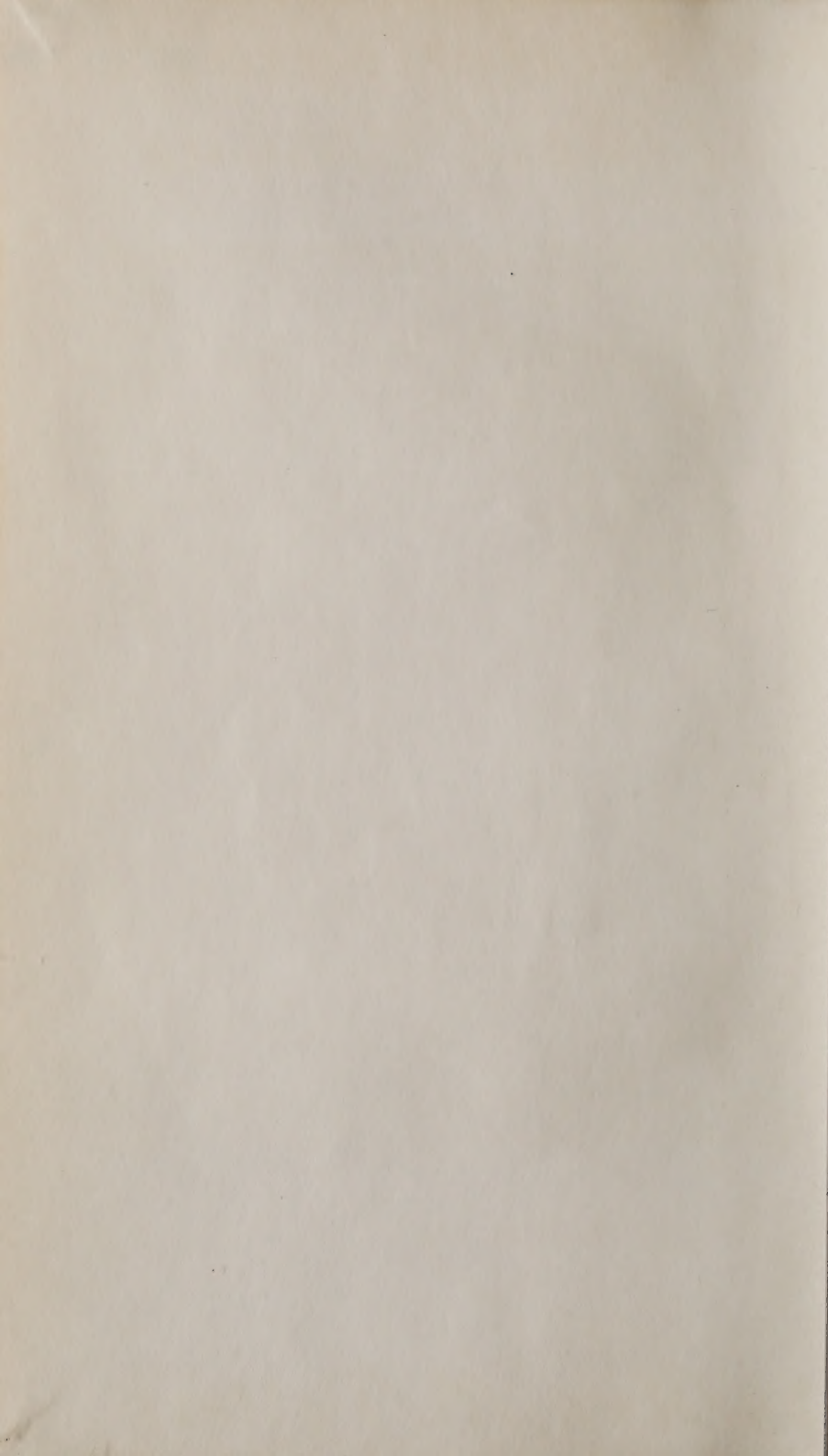
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Historiography of Fort Wayne

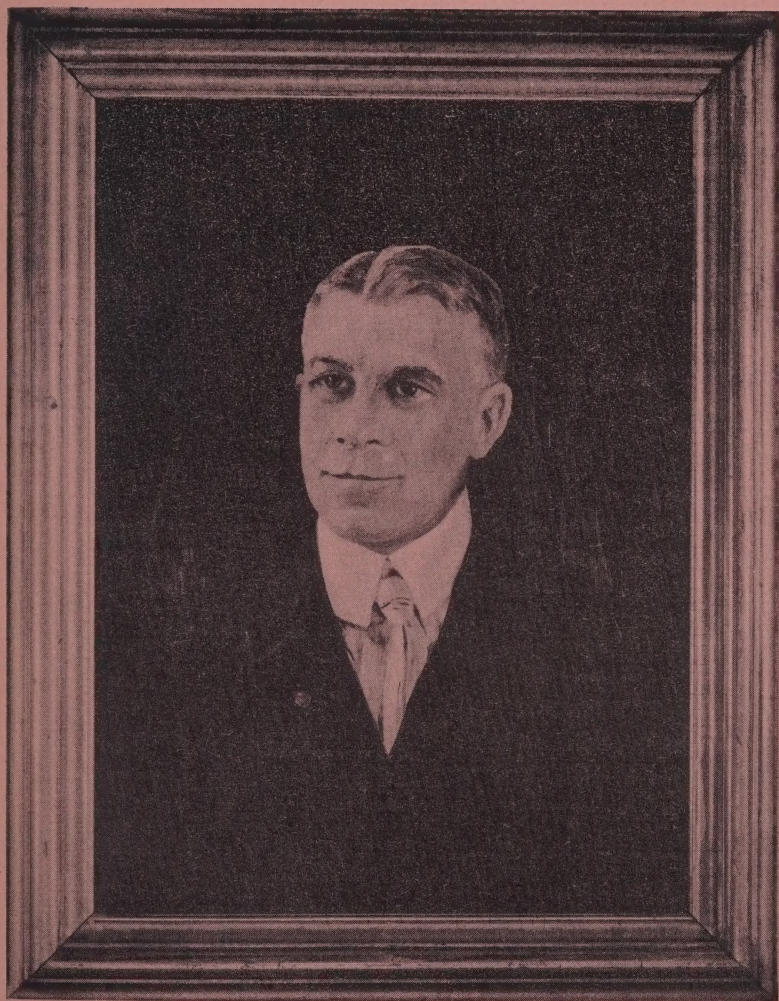
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The Historiography of Fort Wayne



The Contribution of Bert Griswold

by Rex M. Potter

Allen County Public Library
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*The Historiography
of Fort Wayne*

The Contribution of Bert Griswold

by Rex M. Potter

Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society
1958

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FOREWORD

The following address was delivered by Rex M. Potterf, Librarian of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County, January 5, 1958, on the occasion of the dedication of the Bert J. Griswold Room in the Museum of the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society.

Mrs. Miller Ellingham recently completed an oil portrait of Mr. Griswold from the photograph in his BUILDERS OF GREATER FORT WAYNE; the cover illustration is a reproduction of her painting.

The Board of Directors of the Society has authorized this publication in the hope that it will serve as a key to much of the historical literature bearing on Fort Wayne.

The warp and woof of the fabric which constitutes the history of Fort Wayne includes many threads supplied by the patience and devotion of more than a score of sturdy and dedicated men and women. Time for sufficient research, or even a long enough period for relating what I have had time to unearth, are both far too limited to do these noble personalities justice. I can only briefly mention, epitomize, and relate them to that great and towering figure, Bert J. Griswold.

The historian Parkman, writing in 1848, has dealt generally with the tenure of the French in this area. He related for the first time the story of Ensign Holmes and the treachery of the Indian girl.

General Henry Hamilton, Lieutenant Governor of Detroit during the Revolution, has left his name imperishably in American history as the "Hair Buyer" by his practice of buying American scalps from Indians in this area. In the course of his expedition from Detroit to Vincennes to attack the forces of General George Rogers Clark, Governor Hamilton led his fleet of bateaux across Lake Erie, thence through the Maumee-Wabash Portage, and eventually to the Wabash. He has left us an excellent and absorbing account of this famous portage, its beaver dam, and the classic difficulties of transit.

Anthony Wayne was the only military officer of the American Revolutionary War in any of the three participating armies--French, British, or American--who enhanced his military reputation after that war. He was fated to make his greatest military contribution right here in connection with Fort Wayne. His daily journal must form the framework of any historical narrative of his conquest. The biographies of Wayne by Wildes and Boyd both afford excellent accounts of the events leading to the founding of Fort Wayne. A large portion of these two volumes are an integral part of the history of Fort Wayne.

The Indian Committee of the Baltimore yearly meeting of the Society of Friends visited Fort Wayne in 1804. The record which the Committee left us presents a vivid picture of Fort Wayne

and its environment. Difficulties of travel, the location of centers of Indian population, the influence of Chiefs Little Turtle and Tarhe the Crane, the material needs and wants of the Indians, the portage and the importance of the river systems of northeastern Indiana are some of the subjects treated. One important impression, which the reader must receive from this report, is that the waning prestige of Little Turtle at the time of the Battle of Fallen Timbers had later burgeoned and he was again in his last years the trusted leader and accepted sage of the still present, but greatly weakened, Miami tribe.

Captain McAfee, a veteran of the War of 1812, wrote the **LATE WAR IN THE WESTERN COUNTRY**, which was published in 1819. This work includes a very good early description of the portage between the headwaters of the Wabash and the Maumee. Captain McAfee had spent some time in this vicinity and knew a great deal about the country from the vantage point of an eyewitness.

Hugh McCulloch (1808-1895) came to Fort Wayne to enter the practice of law in 1833. He engaged in that profession, however, for only a brief period. From 1835 to 1856 he served as manager of the Fort Wayne Branch of the Bank of Indiana. In 1856 he was appointed manager of the Bank of Indiana with offices at Indianapolis. Later, he served with distinction as Secretary of the Treasury in the cabinets of three presidents--Lincoln, Johnson, and Arthur.

In his **MEN AND MEASURES**, the early chapters contain a wealth of material about Indiana, its early settlers, and its primitive aspects. His characterization of life in Fort Wayne in the 1830's and of a number of its outstanding leaders is distinctive. Other chapters deal with banking and other aspects of early Indiana.

John W. Dawson first came to Fort Wayne in 1838. After residence in a number of other places, he returned to Fort Wayne in 1853 and lived here until his death in 1877, except for his brief residence in Utah during the Civil War. During the period of his residence in Fort Wayne, he was engaged in newspaper work. He owned and published **DAWSON'S TIMES** and later the **PEOPLES' PRESS**. During the last years of his life he wrote articles for the **FORT WAYNE SENTINEL**. In the political campaign of 1860, Dawson championed the cause of Abraham Lincoln and the Repub-

lican party. His influence was exerted against powerful opposition, because Fort Wayne then was strongly Democratic; in the election of 1860, Fort Wayne gave a majority of its vote to Douglas, the Democratic candidate.

President Lincoln must have been strongly impressed, however, with the support he received from Dawson, because shortly after his inauguration he appointed the journalist territorial governor of Utah. This was a political "plum" of importance, and Dawson's appointment indicated that President Lincoln must have thought highly of Dawson's support in Fort Wayne, Indiana. After closing his affairs in the Summit City, Dawson departed for Utah. The newspapers soon carried a story of friction between Dawson and the Mormons of Utah; in a few weeks he returned to Fort Wayne, broken in health and bitter of spirit. Never again did Mr. Dawson have a good word for Abraham Lincoln or the Republican party.

We are indebted to Dawson for much that we know about early Fort Wayne. His articles in the FORT WAYNE SENTINEL, depicting the physical appearance of Fort Wayne in 1838, furnish us with almost all that we know about its contemporary buildings and housing at that time. Again, his "Charcoal Sketches," published in the FORT WAYNE SENTINEL toward the end of his life, are a series of articles which relate to Fort Wayne events and personalities. These have been an invaluable source of information to all historians who have dealt with early Fort Wayne. Without these articles much that we now believe would be a void. His article on Johnny Appleseed furnished the basis for the famous biographical sketch later published in HARPER'S MAGAZINE. Fortunately, Mr. Dawson's articles still live for us in the yellowed pages of the old SENTINEL. To them we may repeatedly turn for inspiration and information about early Fort Wayne.

Wallace Brice, a middle-aged journeyman printer, came to Fort Wayne after the Civil War and practiced his craft in the GAZETTE printing office. He soon became interested in the history of Fort Wayne and noted that there was no comprehensive work on this subject. He read the articles in the local newspapers by John W. Dawson and by Samuel Hanna. They stirred his interest and inspired him to provide more suitable and extensive information.

He began the compilation of local historical material; likewise, he interviewed many pioneers and persons whose recollections extended back to the genesis of the community. Mr. D. W. Jones, the owner of the GAZETTE, collaborated with him. Together they wrote the HISTORY OF FORT WAYNE; the authorship, however, was ascribed to Brice.

The book is mainly a compilation of materials, much of which can be found elsewhere. However, in some respects, it is original and valuable. The account of La Balme's Massacre in 1781 on the Aboite River, although brief, is the most complete account of that event that I have seen. The footnote on the life of Chief Richardville contains original material. The story of the steamboat which navigated the Maumee River from Antwerp to Fort Wayne in 1833 is novel. I have seen it nowhere else. Probably most important is the verbatim account, quoted from the Cass County TIMES of March 2, 1832, dealing with the genesis of the Wabash and Erie Canal when the ground was broken for the Feeder Canal on February 22, 1832. The current extant back files of the papers of Cass County do not include this early issue. No one living has ever seen it. In these and probably other aspects as well, Brice's HISTORY OF FORT WAYNE is our single source of material. Two illustrations occur therein which I have not seen elsewhere, viz., Fort Wayne in 1795 and the contemporary Fort Wayne circa 1869.

At any rate, it was the first attempt to include the story of Fort Wayne in the pages of one book. Published in 1869, the volume is printed on paper manufactured in Fort Wayne. Mr. Jones of the GAZETTE was glad to promote this publication, because he had the contract to print the book in the print shop of the GAZETTE. In the preface Mr. Brice indicates that, prior to the completion of the book, he had made numerous subscription contracts to insure financial success. From the number of copies which still come on the market after nearly ninety years, it must have had quite a run.

Robert S. Robertson was born in 1839 in New York State. He served in the Civil War for a considerable period and was wounded more than once. He was breveted colonel at the end of that struggle. In 1866 Colonel Robertson came to Fort Wayne and began the practice of law in the courts of Allen County. He served

as city attorney, commissioner in the federal court, and as a member of the Utah Commission. He was elected lieutenant governor of the state of Indiana in 1886. He was afterward an unsuccessful candidate for the Republican nomination of governor of Indiana.

Colonel Robertson was a man of extensive culture, versatility, and scholarship. He promoted a number of worthy causes in connection with the history of Fort Wayne. His collection of Indian and pioneer artifacts was extensive and valuable. He compiled much of the material included in the HISTORY OF THE MAUMEE RIVER BASIN, published in 1889. As editor of that work, he guided the researches of others and, indeed, wrote much of it himself. His most important contribution was the very accurate and scholarly account of the organization and history of Allen County as a political unit.

Colonel Robertson and his family were often the social arbiters of the city. He was an able lawyer, a prominent Mason, a dedicated member of the G. A. R., a public speaker much in demand, and a loyal Republican in all political weather. Among his chief local collaborators were Laura Detzer and John Jacobs. Colonel Robertson died in 1906.

John Jacobs, born at Wooster, Ohio, in 1834, served as a captain in the Eleventh Indiana Battery in the Civil War under General Sherman in his march to the sea. Mr. Jacobs engaged in business in Fort Wayne and became president of the Fort Wayne Drug Company. Later he operated a shoe store. At the age of fifty-four he retired from active business. For the next thirty-two years he devoted himself to world travel, reading, and writing history. He died in 1920.

Mr. Jacob's most important historical contribution on the local scene is an account of private libraries in Fort Wayne and a survey of those in existence in 1889. The researches for this work must have been broad and deep. He examined in detail the books in local private libraries and characterized them. The study was published as a part of the Robertson HISTORY OF THE MAUMEE RIVER BASIN.

Edward F. Colerick came to Fort Wayne from Mount Vernon, Ohio. He belonged to a family of Colericks collateral to the Fort Wayne Colericks. The two families were distant cousins.

He was the father of Margaret Colerick, my predecessor as Librarian.

Mr. Colerick had many contacts with the first generation of settlers in Fort Wayne and from them drew numerous anecdotes. For a time he lived in Indianapolis and about 1890 wrote special articles on the history of the Old Northwest which were published in the INDIANAPOLIS NEWS. Also he wrote at least two articles on Little Turtle which were published in the CHICAGO TRIBUNE. Some of these features are original contributions. Two are of particular value. One related to the kidnaping of William Wells. No other writer has given us so many details of that event, nor so well, as Mr. Colerick. Another article deals with cannibalism in the Kekionga neighborhood and is supplementary to that other reference on cannibalism in General Lewis Cass's dedicatory speech at the Canal celebration of July 4, 1843.

Bert J. Griswold was born in Osage, Iowa, in 1873. He secured his education there in the local public schools. Immediately upon completion of his studies, he entered newspaper work. His first job was with the local weekly, the OSAGE NEWS. Thereafter he worked on the WATERLOO COURIER, the CEDAR RAPIDS GAZETTE, the TERRE HAUTE TRIBUNE, and the INDIANAPOLIS STAR. In 1902 he came to Fort Wayne, where he secured employment as the cartoonist for the DAILY NEWS. After working on this paper for ten years, he became the cartoonist for the FORT WAYNE SENTINEL for three years. In 1915 he organized his own advertising agency in which he continued until his death in 1927.

Mr. Griswold gave extensively of himself to many civic enterprises. He became a member of the Plymouth Congregational Church, serving as superintendent of the Sunday School and as a member of the Board of Deacons. He became a Scottish Rite Mason and a member of the Mystic Shrine. He belonged to the Quest Club. He was the first secretary of the Real Estate Board. In 1924 the Optimist Club honored Mr. Griswold at a ceremonial dinner by designating him as the citizen of the year. Former Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall presided as master of ceremonies at this function.

Mr. Griswold became deeply interested in the history of Fort Wayne. Very soon after coming here, he began the compila-

tion of data for the historical work which he was later to write. In 1917 he published his HISTORY OF FORT WAYNE. Just as Herodotus, the Father of History, assembled and recorded the myths, legends, lore, tradition, and annals of the nations round-about Greece, so did Bert J. Griswold within the smaller arena of Fort Wayne, but with far greater fidelity and accuracy, with consideration for minute detail, assemble the facts of the history of Fort Wayne and arrange them into a coherent organization.

The dimensions of Bert Griswold's researches for this vast work extended into all that bore any relation to the project. He carefully perused the local files of newspapers, which, while not complete, were very comprehensive and representative. He examined old records, materials, letters, and documents which many Fort Wayne citizens were glad to permit him to utilize. He recorded the results of long and painstaking interviews with local people whose memories and experiences included worth-while contributions. He even perused the files of newspapers of other cities, particularly the INDIANAPOLIS NEWS and the CHICAGO TRIBUNE. He examined the works of predecessor historians, such as Brice, Slocum, and Robertson. In much of this work he had the collaboration of Laura Detzer, ten years his senior, who had herself previously worked with Colonel Robertson in writing his history of Fort Wayne published in 1889.

The guiding light of Mr. Griswold's historical work was, however, the intense and zealous love and respect which he bore for this city of his adoption. He seemed to stand spellbound by its glorious past. He was no less dazzled by its blossoming and burgeoning future, which he envisioned as no less brilliant. Without thought of self he sought every opportunity to advance the interests of Fort Wayne. He carefully wove the definitive history of Fort Wayne from the materials at hand. No one is likely in the future to attempt to improve on the work he did. For those of us who almost daily have need for information about early Fort Wayne, Griswold's HISTORY is our Bible. It is the work of last resort, for to it, and often to it alone, we must turn for the information we seek. He rescued from oblivion many facts of Fort Wayne history. Today it would be too late; indeed, it would now be impossible to assemble the pictures and the wealth of anecdote which the HISTORY includes. Financially, Griswold's work was mea-

gerly requited. The two volumes of biographies which he published were commercialized. The publication of these biographical works paid him for the inclusion of biographical data about local citizens, but the amount which he received from that source was pitifully small in comparison with the contribution he made in his other works. It was, of course, impossible to make a profit from the HISTORY from so limited a market as buyers of a book of Fort Wayne history.

Bert Griswold was never a wealthy man; he was not even well-to-do. He was, however, rich in things of the spirit. He was widely loved and respected. He participated extensively in the civic life of his city with the full confidence of his fellows. He lived the kind of rich and abundant life which he freely chose for himself. Just prior to his death, the local Rotary Club provided an opportunity for him and his wife to attend the International Convention of Rotary to be held in Ostend, Belgium, with expenses paid. Unfortunately, he died just prior to the convention. In the entire history of Fort Wayne, probably the death and funeral of Mr. Griswold attracted more widespread attention and caused more genuine and universal grief than that of any other person except, perhaps, that of Henry M. Lawton in 1901.

Mrs. Isabel Taylor, who was born in 1859 and died in 1932, came to Fort Wayne in 1886. Mrs. Taylor, as an active member of the D. A. R., was the leading spirit in accumulating the collection of relics which was long on display on the third floor of the Court House. This material formed the genesis of the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society's Museum. Mrs. Taylor early became interested in the history of our city and county and served as the first curator of the museum of the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society.

Mrs. Taylor wrote many of the sketches in the biographical volumes of Griswold's HISTORY OF FORT WAYNE. She also compiled the volume of the Red Cross history of the First World War. This later work was never published but includes an incredible array of facts, materials, and documents bearing upon Fort Wayne's part in World War I. She was a modest, unassuming, and kindly lady. She knew more of the interesting lore of Fort Wayne than anybody with whom I ever have come in contact.

BUILDERS OF GREATER FORT WAYNE was designed by

Mr. Griswold as a commercial enterprise. The original plan called for biographies of approximately three hundred of Fort Wayne's eminent living citizens. At the time of his death, although he had completed contracts for biographies of one hundred eighty-nine subjects, Mr. Griswold had written only one hundred fifty sketches. When it appeared that the work was only partially completed, that the list of subjects was also incomplete, and that the financial return would be somewhat less than the author had planned, the local Rotary Club assumed responsibility for completion of the work. The Club guaranteed to solicit the additional persons wanted for inclusion, to collect fees from them, to employ suitable personnel to write the biographies, and to pay to Mr. Griswold's widow the profits of the enterprise.

In the spring of 1927, shortly after the funeral of Mr. Griswold, Charles R. Lane began the project for Rotary and carried it rapidly to completion. So far as I know, he had no assistance. Mr. Lane had previously engaged in newspaper work, selling real estate, and patent-law practice. The four cornerstones of his life were a fierce and undeviating allegiance to the Republican party, devoted Presbyterianism, deep interest in local newspaper affairs, and the advocacy and practice of prohibition. Mr. Lane had served as editor of the FORT WAYNE GAZETTE until the time of its consolidation with the FORT WAYNE JOURNAL. He had once made an unsuccessful race as Republican candidate for Congress in this district. Mr. Lane gave his best efforts to the completion of this book, and it still stands as the best source of biographical material for most of the persons whose names are therein included. It is a little-known fact today that, while the book carries the name of Bert J. Griswold as author, Lane ghosted almost half of it.

Laura Detzer was born in 1862 and died in 1954. Mrs. Detzer was an active clubwoman and helped organize the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society and the local chapter of the Red Cross. She collaborated with Colonel Robertson on his HISTORY and wrote the section on pioneer Fort Wayne. Her diction was excellent, her choice of material felicitous, and her narration most excellent. Written in the 1880's, it is still interesting and instructive reading. Mrs. Detzer covered completely the old files of the Fort Wayne newspapers then in print, but she also had access to the recollections and memoirs of many early settlers and

pioneers then still living. Later she assisted Bert J. Griswold in writing his HISTORY.

All of these personalities are with us no more; sometimes I conceive them all--Dawson, Robertson, Griswold--now communing at their leisure with the great men of whom they wrote--Little Turtle, Johnny Appleseed, Anthony Wayne, Tecumseh, Jesse L. Williams, Samuel Hanna, and others; I fancy them exchanging reminiscences and comparing notes. At any rate, the old crop has been harvested, and the reapers are gone. Still in any future attempt to write the historiography of Fort Wayne, say a century hence, I am certain that the historiographer will ascribe a high place to the work of four of our members who are alive today on January 5, 1958.

Robert H. Harris served long and successfully as teacher of mathematics in the Indianapolis and Fort Wayne high schools. He likewise served with distinction as principal of South Side High School and James Smart School.

Mr. Harris early became interested in that period of Johnny Appleseed's life spent at Fort Wayne. He unearthed the estate records of John Chapman long buried in the ancient accumulations of the Allen County Court House. His interest in this subject has resulted in much of the progress made thus far toward a Johnny Appleseed Memorial. A few years ago he began to record his vast accumulated knowledge of Johnny Appleseed. He entitled his compilation the JOHNNY APPLESEED SOURCE BOOK and published it in 1956. This has been acclaimed as the best and most comprehensive work ever written on Johnny Appleseed.

Cleo Wilkins has engaged in a form of research which has been very rewarding because of her painstaking efforts and tremendous industry. She has enlisted the aid of a number of dedicated D. A. R. workers who have aided her in the collection of material. They have made her work possible. She has made their work usable. She has investigated and prepared massive and detailed records of marriages in Allen, De Kalb, Wells, and Adams counties. This work, while difficult and sometimes tedious, stands today as a monolith of labor. It will be the foundation for the genealogical studies during all the centuries to follow us. These records are not only among the treasured of our own library but are also in numerous other libraries, such as the State Library,

the Newberry Library, the National D. A. R. Library.

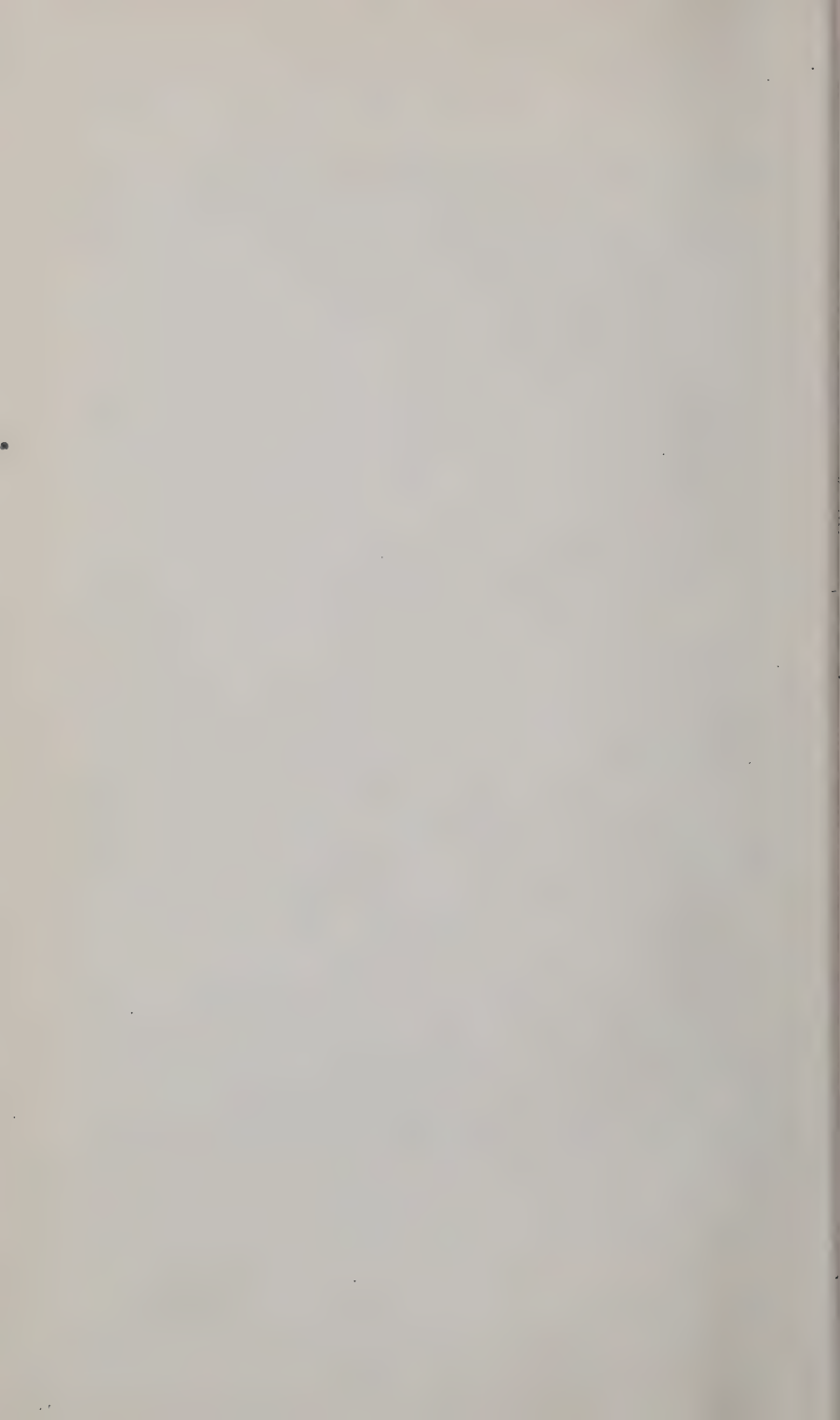
Her latest work is a much needed and an exhaustive index to Brice's HISTORY OF FORT WAYNE. Cleo Wilkins has become an outstanding genealogist and an able indexer. She has excelled in a field which has seemed to frighten others by its difficulties.

Bessie K. Roberts has studied, researched, and written Fort Wayne history for a half century. She served her apprenticeship under Bert Griswold, Ross Lockridge, and Isabel Taylor. She has written articles for the publications of the Historical Society and for the Fort Wayne newspapers. Some of the most important of her numerous researches have been into the lives of Jean B. Richardville and William Wells. She has interviewed men and women who have played significant roles in city history. In the light of her own vast knowledge of local history, she has interpreted the subject matter of these interviews into vignettes of Fort Wayne, which are original and distinctive. These articles and essays will constitute sources from which the history writers of the future may draw.

Roy Bates has investigated many obscure details of the history of Allen County never previously explored. Some of his original studies relate to ghost towns, power mills, township boundaries, Allen County jails, and local railroad origins. Only a part of his studies have been published. Other valuable original materials which he has compiled await his organization, or that of some future historian, for publication. He has been a lonely but indefatigable worker. In a few years the story of Robison Park will exist nowhere except in the article so entitled by Mr. Bates.

Calvin Young, born in 1851 and a resident of Greenville, Ohio, devoted many years to collecting the facts of Little Turtle's life. His pamphlet on the subject is the best compilation.

And now that I have enumerated these luminaries who have recorded an eventful past, I see in my mind's eye the greatest historian of them all--Bert J. Griswold. His spirit and pervasive influence still preside over the destinies of this city, which he loved so well, like a guardian angel. In dedicating this room of archives to him, we drop a petal on the memory of one of the city's greatest men.



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